

A Guide to Construction Apprenticeships for Employers

Apprenticeships can help all types of businesses across a wide range of sectors harness fresh new talent. They can help equip your workforce with the practical skills and qualifications that your organisation needs now and in the future and you will enjoy the benefits of having a loyal and motivated workforce that you have trained to meet your own specific business requirements. Many employers have reported that by employing apprentices their productivity has improved and their businesses have grown.

What is an Apprenticeship?

An apprenticeship is a job offering a minimum of 21 contracted hours per week with the same employer with a structured period of both on and off the job training (usually 4 days with the employer and 1 day with the training provider) leading to a nationally recognised qualification. Apprentices are employed with the employer from day one of their apprenticeship programme.

Apprenticeships can take between two and four years to complete and are available in a variety of roles. They are available from Level 2 (GCSE Equivalent) and Level 3 (A Level equivalent) through the ApprenticeshipsNI programme and from Level 4 to Level 7 through the Higher Level Apprenticeships programme.



ApprenticeshipsNI (Level 2 & Level 3)

Level 2 is the first level and the one that most new apprentices choose.

Your apprentice can either progress from Level 2 to Level 3 or go straight in at Level 3, depending on their ability and the qualifications they already have. For some apprenticeships there are minimum entry requirements such as GCSE's. The chosen training provider can advise on what the minimum entry requirements are for each occupation.

It usually takes up to two years to achieve a Level 2 qualification and up to four years to achieve a Level 3 qualification depending on their complexity and the trainee's ability.

CITB NI would encourage employers to ensure that apprentices complete their apprenticeship with the Level 3 qualification.

The following are just some of the apprenticeships that are available through the ApprenticeshipsNI programme for construction:

- Joinery
- Painting & Decorating
- Bricklaying
- Wall & Floor Tiling
- Roof, Slating & Tiling
- Stonemasonry
- Plastering

Find out who delivers construction apprenticeship training in your area by logging onto <http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/services/find-apprenticeship-training> and talk to them about the entry criteria for the apprentice you wish to recruit.

The Department for the Economy will pay training supplier costs for ApprenticeshipsNI 'off-the-job' training and the employer pays the apprentice for the day(s) they attend the training provider as well as the days they are at work.

Higher Level Apprenticeships

Higher Level Apprenticeships are for your employees who have completed A Levels or equivalent and offers the opportunity to gain quality training and a recognised qualification currently between Level 4 to Level 7. Entry requirements depend on the apprenticeship pathway and the length of the Apprenticeship will vary depending on the programme chosen, but will be a minimum of two years.

The following are just some of the Higher Level Apprenticeships available:

- Foundation Degree in Civil Engineering
- Higher National Certificate in Construction & the Built Environment
- BSc (Hons) Construction Engineering & Management
- MSc in Planning & Development

Find the full list of construction Higher Level Apprenticeships available [here](#) or log on to <https://bit.ly/4dKwGXc>

Further information on Higher Level Apprenticeships can be found [here](#) or by logging on to <https://bit.ly/3MsRntx>

Further information on the different levels of qualifications can be found [here](#) or by logging onto <https://bit.ly/46Hgwe8>

Non-Construction related Apprenticeships for your business

Apprenticeships are also available for other areas of your business through the ApprenticeshipsNI and Higher Level Apprenticeship Programmes including IT, Finance and Administration. Find out more [here](#) or log on to <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/apprenticeships>

Advertising your opportunity

You may have a potential apprentice in your workforce; if not there are various methods of finding one. If you have an apprenticeship vacancy you can:

- Advertise through your own website and social media channels
- Place a vacancy on [JobApplyNI](#) the free website developed by the Department for Communities that enables employers to promote and advertise jobs and apprenticeship opportunities.
- Advertise in your local press
- Contact your local Jobs and Benefits Office
- Contact local schools, further education colleges, university or contracted training provider who may be aware of potential employees and can display advertisements for you

Who pays for the training?

Funding for the directed (or 'off-the-job') training element is provided by the Department for the Economy (DfE).

- **ApprenticeshipsNI** - DfE pays the full cost of the off-the-job training. An incentive payment is available for employers when an apprentice successfully achieves all qualifications on their Level 2 and/or Level 3 ApprenticeshipsNI full framework.
- **HLA Programme (Level 4 to Level 7)** - DfE provides funding at a specified rate calculated with reference to mainstream Further and Higher Education funding.



What Other Support is Available?

For employees enrolled onto an Apprenticeship programme the following funding may be available:

- If you are registered with CITB NI and have met the Terms and Conditions of the CITB NI Grant Scheme, there is a £6,500 Apprentice grant (see next section for more detail).
- Employers who employ an apprentice from the start of their apprenticeship through to completion of their NVQ Level 2 and Level 3 on ApprenticeshipsNI programme may also be entitled to up to £1,674 available from the Department for the Economy, paid through the training provider.

Total grant available can be up to £8,174 paid at different stages throughout the apprenticeship term.

CITB NI Apprentice Grant

CITB NI registered employers can claim up to £6,500 for a fully employed apprentice over a 3 year period. To be eligible for the grant a number of terms and conditions apply. For example the apprentice has to be employed by the registered employer for at least six months and be registered on an approved apprenticeship scheme and in regular attendance at the training provider. The employer must have completed the Annual Levy Return Form by the specified deadline.

A grant application form must be submitted either online or by post within 3 months of your apprentice first being registered onto the apprenticeship programme. The grant is paid in stages as illustrated below on completion of the relevant number of months and NVQ.

Please refer to full terms and conditions of the CITB NI grant scheme.

CITB NI Apprenticeships NI Grant Payment			
YEAR 1	Employment Grant	£1,500	Running Total
YEAR 2	Employment Grant	£1,500	£3,000
	VQ Level 2 Achievement Grant	£1,000	£4,000
YEAR 3	Employment Grant	£1,000	£5,000
	VQ Level 3 Achievement Grant	£1,500	£6,500



CITB NI Higher Level Apprentice Grant

Higher Level Apprenticeships (HLA) up to Level 5

CITB NI registered employers can also claim a grant of up to £6,500 for employees completing a Higher Level Apprenticeship. The grant is spread across the duration of the apprenticeship as illustrated in the table below.

Again a number of terms and conditions apply - please refer to the full terms and conditions of the CITB NI Grant Scheme.

For Level 6 and above

Grant will be paid at £2,000 on achievement. Grant claim must be submitted within three months of notification of successful completion.

CITB NI Higher Level Apprenticeship Grant Payment up to Level 5			
YEAR 1	Employment Grant	£1,500	Running Total
YEAR 2	Employment Grant	£1,500	£3,000
YEAR 3	Employment Grant	£1,500	£4,500
	Achievement Grant	£2,000	£6,500

For all CITB NI apprenticeship grants the apprentice must be employed by the employer claiming the grant for a minimum of 6 months.

The CITB NI apprentice grant is not just for construction apprenticeships. The grant is also available for apprentices in other areas of your business for example, plant mechanics, administration, etc.

CITB NI Grant Terms and Conditions

There is no cap on the CITB NI apprentice grant

A copy of the full terms and conditions of the CITB NI grant scheme can be found on the following link
<http://www.citbni.org.uk/Grants.aspx>

For further advice and guidance on the CITB NI Grant, please contact the Grants Support Team on 02890 825466 or email your query to grants@citbni.org.uk

Apprentice Wages

National Minimum Wage

As the employer you will pay your apprentice just as you would any other employee. The National Minimum Wage (NMW) is a minimum amount that workers in the UK are entitled to be paid. See www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/national-minimum-wage-and-living-wage for further details.

Recommended Joint Council for the Building & Civil Engineering Industry NI Wage*

As at the 1 January 2024 the recommended rate agreed by the Joint Council for the Building & Civil Engineering Industry (NI) for an apprentice commences at £8.18 for a first year apprentice in their first 6 months rising to £12.97 at NVQ Level 3. See over for 2024 and 2025 rates:



	1 January 2024		From 1 January 2025	
	Hourly Rate	Weekly Minimum Wage	Hourly Rate	Weekly Minimum Wage
1st 6 Months	£8.18	£319.02	£8.51	£331.89
2nd 6 Months	£9.35	£364.65	£9.72	£379.08
After 12 Months	£9.48	£369.72	£9.86	£384.54
At NVQ 2	£10.14	£395.46	£10.55	£411.45
At NVQ 3	£12.97	£505.83	£13.49	£526.11

* Rates correct at time of print

Note: If the National Minimum Wage/ National Living Wage is higher than the agreed wage rate the National Minimum Wage/ National Living Wage rate applies.

If you want more information on the apprenticeships available or recruiting apprentices contact the Department for the Economy:

Email: Apprenticeships@economy-ni.gov.uk

Email: Higherlevelapprenticeships@economy-ni.gov.uk

(Higher Level Apprenticeships enquiries)

Or visit the website:

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/apprenticeships>

More useful links:

www.citbni.org.uk/careers.aspx

www.goconstruct.org

Decided you want to take on an Apprentice? What to do next:

- Contact your local training provider
- Recruit your apprentice
- Provide induction and put in place 'regular catch ups' (see our top tips for retaining apprentices section)
- Register the apprentice onto the Apprenticeship programme at the chosen training provider
- Submit a CITB NI Grant Application Form online and send in relevant supporting information/evidence throughout the duration of the apprenticeship (CITB NI will support you by keeping in contact to request the necessary information to allow your grant to be processed)



Traineeships

A Traineeship is a programme for someone who is aged 16 years or over, who is not yet in employment or working in their chosen occupational area. A Traineeship will provide a high-quality vocational education and training programme, including structured work-based learning.

Through the Traineeship Programme, employers can access a pipeline of talent and learners by providing the work-based learning to help trainees gain a full Level 2 qualification.

Employers interested in supporting a trainee through the work-based learning element of the Traineeship are invited to contact their local college.

Further information and to download 'An Employer Guide to Traineeships' can be found [here](https://www.citbni.org.uk/Careers/Traineeships.aspx) or log on to www.citbni.org.uk/Careers/Traineeships.aspx or contact your local college.



Retaining Apprentices – Top Tips, how can you make sure they stay?

For many apprentices this is their first job and they will have to learn about the world of work. To be successful and retain apprentices you should be aiming to be an attractive employer offering career development opportunities.

Our top tips to help you retain your apprentices throughout the course of their apprenticeship programme and beyond are:

1. Deliver what you promise

A key way to make sure that your apprentices want to stay is to deliver. If the apprentice programme does not match up to what you have promised, you will end up with demotivated or even frustrated trainees who will start searching for new opportunities elsewhere.

2. Be responsive

Whilst apprentices are a great source of future talent, it is highly important to create a nurturing work environment for them to grow and develop in. Since they have no experience of working previously, it is up to you to create an open flow of communication and be responsive.

3. Stay competitive

With competition for apprentices growing every year, it is important to understand how your organisation stands out from competitors. Do not be afraid to find out why your apprentices joined you in the first place.

4. Progress

Often overlooked, a vital reason as to why candidates opt for the apprenticeship route initially is the promise of progression. The potential to be at a certain status or earning a certain salary by a certain age is incredibly attractive for apprentices.

5. Communication

The key to a good apprenticeship is communication between employer and apprentice. To establish that communication early on, take your apprentice through an induction process in the first couple of weeks. Put in place regular “catch ups” where you can discuss with the apprentice how they are progressing and highlight any positive working habits or behaviours.



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Tel: 028 9082 5466
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For an online version of this flyer log on to
<https://www.citbni.org.uk/Careers.aspx>

All information correct at time of print - check links for any updates.